

2348
*The Watchman's Answer to the
Question, What of the Night?*

A
S E R M O N

Preached to the

S O C I E T Y,

Which Support the

Wednesday's Evening Lecture

I N

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By J O H N G I L L, D. D. *K*

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Is. xxi. 11, 12.

The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come.



HERE are several prophecies in this book, both in the preceding and following chapters, which are called *burdens*; which contain sad and heavy judgments, grievous calamities and distresses, that should come upon nations; and foretel the ruin and destruction of kingdoms and states, and which may be the reason why they are so called; tho' it must be owned, that there are some prophecies which bear this name, that bring good tidings of good things*,

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yet

* Vid. Zach. ix. 1, 9. and xii. 1, 10.

yet more rarely. There are no less than three prophecies of this name in this chapter. The words of the text are one, and there is one before them, and another after them. The chapter begins with *the burden of the desert of the sea, or plain of the sea*; which describes the city of *Babylon*, afterwards named, and which was built on a plain, and in a watry place, by the river *Euphrates*; and it is usual with *Jewish* writers, inspired or uninspired, to call any confluence of water a sea; whose destruction is foretold as what would be by the *Medes* and *Persians*; and these are mentioned by name, ver. 2. as well as signified by a chariot with a couple of horsemen, ver. 7. and its ruin is declared in express words, ver. 9. and the whole is delivered out in such a manner, as may easily be accommodated to mystical *Babylon*; who is represented as in a wilderness, sitting upon many waters, agreeable to ver. 1. whose destruction will be by the lion of the tribe of *Judah*, see ver. 8, and which is expressed by the self-same words as are in ver. 9. and that for the comfort of the Lord's people, ver. 10. ^b.

The prophecy in our text is called *the burden of Dumah*; whether it respects the *Arabians*, particularly the *Dumean Arabians*, or whether the *Edomites* or *Idumeans*, is a matter of question: some think the former,

^b Rev. xvii. 1, 3. and v. 5. and xix. 11—20. and xviii. 2, 4.

former, because *Dumah* was a son of *Ishmael*, *Gen. xxv. 14.* and of him *Aben Ezra* and *Kimchi* interpret it here; and there was a place in *Arabia* called *Dumat*^a: but others are of opinion, that the latter, the *Edomites* or *Idumeans*, are intended; and the *Septuagint* version renders the words *the vision of Idumea*; and the *Arabic* version calls them a prophecy concerning *Edom* and *Seir*; and so *Jarchi* by *Dumah* understands *Edom*; and the rather the *Edomites* may be thought to be here meant, since a distinct prophecy concerning *Arabia* follows after; and because mention is made of *Seir*, which was a mountain that belonged to, and was inhabited by, the *Edomites*^d: *he calleth to me out of Seir*; or there was a cry out of *Seir*; one called from thence to the watchman, and asked him a question, to which he returned an answer, and also gave some advice. Now let it be observed, that this prophecy may refer to the time when *Edom* should be a possession, and *Seir* also should be a possession for his enemies; that is, be possessed by the *Jews*, as is foretold^e they would; and which was fulfilled before the coming of *Christ*, when the *Jews* and *Idumeans* were mixed together; and the latter, at least many of them, embraced the *Jewish* religion^f, and

^a Vid. Hiller. Onomasticon Sacr. p. 797.
xxxvi. 8, 9. ^b Numb. xxiv. 18.
Antiqu. l. 13. c. 9. §. 1.

^d Gen.
of Joseph.

so had knowledge of the Messiah and his coming; and perhaps some of them savingly believed in him; and these, some one or more of them, or however, the *Jews* that were in *Seir* or in *Idumea*, may be thought to be here enquiring after him, when he would come and put an end to the then present night of darkness, and make the morning of the Gospel-dispensation: and it may be further observed, that as *Esau* or *Edom* may be considered as a type of anti-christ, the *Edomites* may represent the anti-christian party. *Jerom*^z says, that some of the *Hebrews* read *Roma* for *Duma* here, and suppose that the *Roman* empire is designed; and certain it is, that nothing is more common with them, than to call the *Roman* empire, and *Rome* itself *Edom*, and the *Romans* or *Papists*, *Edomites*^h. Now, as in the darkest times of popery, there were some that rose up as witnesses to the truth, there were others that embraced it; who doubtless enquired of the witnesses, the watchmen, when the night of popish darkness would be over, and Gospel-light break forth; and it is easy to observe, that a little before the destruction of *Babylon*, God will have a people in her, whom he will call to come forth out of the midst of her, that they partake not of her sins, nor of her plagues;

^z In loc.
col. 30, 31, &c.

^h Vid. Buxtorf. Lexic. Talmud.

plaguesⁱ; and these, sensible of the state of darkness they are in, may be supposed to be enquiring after latter day-light and glory. These short hints may serve to give us a little light into this obscure passage; and which will open more and more as we go along, considering the following things.

I. Who the *watchman* is that is here applied unto.

II. The question that is put to him and repeated; *Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?*

III. The watchman's answer to it; *The morning cometh, and also the night.*

IV. An exhortation upon it, which may serve for the use and improvement of the whole; *If you will enquire, enquire ye, return, come.*

I. Who the *watchman* is, that is addressed; and to whom the question in the text is put.

I. Some by the watchman understand God himself^k: the name and title of a watcher is sometimes given to him, and indeed to all the divine persons, who are called *watchers* and *holy ones*, *Dan. iv. 17.* where the affair of *Nebuchadnezzar* being driven from his throne and palace, to dwell among the beasts of the field, is said to be

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ⁱ Rev. xviii. 4.

^k So Jarchi and Abarbinel in loc.

a matter by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones. I know this is commonly understood of angels, and they are watchers by office, being the guardians of God's people, and holy by nature ; they may be said also to declare and execute the decrees of God, but then his decrees are never called theirs ; and besides, this decree is expressly called the decree of the Most High, ver. 24 and these watchers and holy ones are represented as having others under them, whom they call upon to execute this decree, ver. 23. and where they are called the watcher and the holy one ; as before, the plural number is used to denote the plurality of persons in the Godhead, there the singular, to secure the unity of the divine essence.

Acts of watching are ascribed to God, sometimes in a bad sense, and sometimes in a good one : I mean, that sometimes he is said to watch over men for evil, and sometimes for good ; his eyes are upon the ways of all men good and bad, and he sees all their goings, and watches their sins to chastize or punish for them ; he watches over the sins of his own people to correct them for them, in a fatherly way, but not in a way of strict justice ; not so as to demand satisfaction of them, or inflict vindictive wrath upon them ; should he mark iniquity in such a manner, there would be no stand-

ing before him; tho' sometimes they think he does do so: thus *Job*¹, now *thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin? my transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou soweest up mine iniquity*; in order to bring it forth one day, as he thought, against him, to his condemnation. God does indeed watch over the sins of wicked men, of a rebellious and impenitent people, to punish them for them; and he watches upon the evil of punishment, to bring it on such for the evil of sin; as *Daniel* says^m, *therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us*: and as he sometimes watches over a people to pluck up and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy and to afflict, so he watches over them. to build and to plantⁿ, or to do them good; he waits upon his own people to be gracious to them, and watches the set time for that purpose; his eyes are always on them, and are never withdrawn from them; they are engraven on his hands, and they are continually before him.

The *Hebrew* word שמר, here translated a watchman, is used of God in *Pf.* cxxi. 4, 5. and is there rendred *keeper*, and well agrees with him who is the keeper of his *Israel*, both in a way of providence, and in a way of grace; he is the preserver of men, yea the Saviour of all men as the God of pro-

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vidence,

¹ Job. xiv. 16, 17.^m Dan. ix. 14.ⁿ Jer. xxxi. 28.

vidence, especially of them that believe; he keeps them from evil; he preserves their going out and coming in; he watches over them night and day, lest any hurt them; and indeed, *except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*^o: and he is the keeper of his people in a way of grace; they are sensible of their own weakness, and of their need of his power, and therefore apply to him for preservation; one says^p, *keep me from evil that it may not grieve me*; and another says^q, *keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins*; and the Lord does preserve the souls of his faithful ones; they are kept by his power thro' faith unto salvation.

To all which may be added, who so proper to apply unto, to know the time of night, as to God, who hath *put the times and the seasons in his own power*, and who has *determined the times before appointed*, for the performance of every thing that is done in this world? for *to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven*^r; every thing is done as it was purposed, and at the time it should, and which is known to God; particularly the time of Christ's first coming into the world, was agreed and fixed upon between the Father and the Son, called *the fulness of time*^s, and was known
to

^o Ps. cxxvii. 1.

^p 1 Chron. iv. 10.

^q Ps. xix. 13.

^r Acts i. 6. and xvii. 26.

Eccl. iii. 1.

^s Gal. iv. 4.

to them both, and made known in the word: and the time of his second coming is also appointed; God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Christ, and him he will shew in his times; *tho' of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father only*^t.

2. Others^u by the watchman think Christ is meant; so the *Jews*^w say, this is *Metatron* the keeper of *Israel*, which with them is one of the names of the Messiah; and to whom this character of a watchman agrees, as he is a shepherd; one part of whose business it is to watch over the flock by night and by day: Christ does the whole work and office of a shepherd to his flock; he feeds his flock like a shepherd; he guards and protects it, as *David* his type did; he secures it from the lion and the bear; and being the proprietor of the flock, whose own the sheep are, will not flee as an hireling does when the wolf cometh, but expose his life to danger for them; and indeed he laid down his life for the sheep. This character of a watchman agrees with him, as the keeper of his people; they are put into his hands, and there they are, out of which none can pluck them; they are pre-

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served

^t Acts xvii. 31. ⁱ Tim. vi. 15. Matt xxiv. 36.

^u Cocceius in loc.

^w Zohar. in Exod. fol. 54. 2.

served in Christ, who is able to keep them from falling; and who keeps a watchful eye over them continually, and will take care that not one of them should be lost or perish, but have everlasting life. And now, as he is the omniscient God, he knows and can *declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done*^{*}: he knew the time of his first coming into the world, and so likewise of his going out of it. *Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father*[†]; and he knows the time of his second coming also, and of all intermediate events; of every thing that should happen from his first to his second coming; he knows the things that are, and which shall be hereafter: the book of the *Revelation* is called *the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to shew unto his servants, things that must shortly come to pass*[‡]; wherefore whither should we go but to him, to know what of the night it is? But perhaps it may be thought to be too bold, too free and familiar to address God or Christ under this character, and in such language, *watchman, what of the night?* Therefore

3. I chuse rather to join with those, who think that a prophet or minister of the word is intended by the watchman: it was usual under the Old Testament, for prophets to be

^{*} Is. xlv. 10.

[†] John xiii. 1.

[‡] Rev. i. 1.

be called watchmen; the prophet *Isaiab* was one, and perhaps is intended in ver. 6; 8. and in the text; and so was *Jeremiah*; and so was *Ezekiel*; to whom it is said, *son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel*^a: Gospel-ministers are also called watchmen^b; *the watchmen shall lift up the voice*, &c. and this in allusion to shepherds, which is one of their titles and characters; *pastors*, which God gives *after his own heart*, to feed his people *with knowledge and understanding*^c; who, having taken the oversight of the flock, ought to take heed to themselves, and to that; and one part of their work is to watch in all things; and they do watch for and over the souls of men, as they that must give an account. Moreover, they are called watchmen, in allusion to watchmen in cities, of which there are two sorts; some that go about the city, and others that are set on the walls of it; and to each of these the ministers of the word are compared in *Cant.* iii. 3. and v. 7. see also *Is.* lxii. 6. *I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem*, &c.

The qualifications for such an office are quickness of sight, vigilance, constancy, courage and faithfulness: watchmen ought to have their sight, and keep a good look out; they ought to be awake, and not asleep, and constant in their post; should be men
of

^a Ezek. iii. 17.^b Is. lii. 8.^c Jer. iii. 15.

of resolution and intrepidity in time of danger, and faithful to give warning of it; and so should the ministers of the word. Sad it is, when *Zion's* watchmen are blind, and yet we read of such: the four living creatures mentioned in the book of the *Revelation*^d, are emblems of Gospel-ministers; and they are said to be full of eyes within, and before, and behind; and they have need of all the eyes they have, to take heed to themselves, and to watch over others: they ought to be sober and vigilant, and in their watch-tower, and on their guard; for while men sleep, the enemy sows tares of error, heresy, and division: they should be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; they should watch and stand fast in the faith, and quit themselves like men, and be strong; and they should not conceal any thing that ought to be known, or keep back that which is profitable, but declare the whole counsel of God.

Their work is to warn sinners of their evil ways, and of the danger they are in by them; to shew them what an evil and bitter thing sin is, and that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against it; that the wages of sin is death eternal; and that destruction and misery are in all their ways, in which they will issue, if grace prevent not; and to convince them of the worth of their precious

^d Ch. iv. 6, 8.

cious and immortal souls, and that the loss of them is irrecoverable, and that nothing can be given in exchange for them. Also their business is to arouse and awake sleepy faints; the wise as well as the foolish virgins, sometimes fall asleep; and it is the duty of the watchmen to awake them, and let them know, how unbecoming it is for persons of their characters to be asleep; *they that sleep, sleep in the night,—but let us who are of the day be sober; let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch^e*: children of the light and of the day, should not sleep as those who are of the night and darkness; the watchmen should tell them, it is high time to awake out of sleep, and jog them, and stir them up; and if this won't do, they should cry aloud and spare not, and lift up their voice like a trumpet, and say, *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light^f*: moreover, another part of their office is, to give the time of the night; as it is the business of a watchman on the walls to look out, and if he descries an enemy, to observe his motions and advances, and give notice of approaching danger to them within the city; so it is the business of the watchmen that go about the city, as to take up strolling persons and examine them; so to give the inhabitants the hour of the night, that they may know how

^e 1 Thess. v. 5, 6, 7.

^f Eph. v. 14.

how much of it is gone, and what is yet to come; and this is the office of the ministers of the word: the watchmen of the Old Testament, the prophets, gave the time of night then; they *enquired and searched diligently, searching what or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*^a; and so the watchmen of the New Testament, the ministers of the Gospel, it becomes them to enquire what time it now is, that they may be able in some measure to give an answer to such a question as is here put, *what of the night?* In order to which, it is necessary to study the prophetic part of the New Testament, particularly the book of the *Revelation*; and which, according to its name, is a revelation and not a secret; an open, and not a sealed book; and *blessed is he that readeth this book, not only privately, but in public, in order to explain it unto others; and blessed are they that hear the words of this prophecy*^b explained by their minister; so the one will be ready to ask, and the other ready to answer the question here proposed, which is the next thing to be attended to; wherefore I pass on to consider

II. The question put to the watchman, *Watchman, what of the night?* and which

is

^a 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

^b Rev. i. 3.

is repeated, *watchman, what of the night?* This is usually done when persons are in a panic, or they fear the watchman did not hear them the first time; or it may denote one coming after another in a fright, asking the same question. The sense is, either *what from the night*^h? as the words may be rendered; what has happened since it was night? hast thou observed nothing? is the enemy near, or danger at hand? or *what sayst thou concerning the night?* the night of darkness and affliction in which we are, when will it be over? or what time of night is it? what o'clock is it? how much of the night is there gone? and what is there that remains to come?

Now let it be observed, that there was a night both in the *Jewish* and *Gentile* world, preceding the first coming of Christ: the former dispensation was a night of darkness with the *Jews* themselves, in comparison of the Gospel-day, or that famous day, so much and so often spoken of in this prophecy of *Isaiah*; which was made by the rising of the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings; and which reaches from the first coming of Christ unto his second coming; and of which it may be said, during that time, *now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation*ⁱ; but before this it was night; and it may be, that in reference to

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this,

בַּה מְלִילָה.

ⁱ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

this, as well as to the darkness which overspread the *Gentile* world, and which was in a great measure removed, by the preaching of the Gospel, the Apostle says, *the night is far spent, the day is at hand*^k: it is certain however, that there was a great obscurity in the *Mosaic* dispensation; the law was given amidst blackness, darkness, and tempest; there was a veil over the face of *Moses* when he spoke unto the people; and there is another on their hearts, in reading the Old Testament, *Moses* and the prophets; and which remains untaken away from them to this day, but will be removed when they shall be turned to the Lord; the doctrines of grace tho' then delivered, yet very obscurely in types and figures; the way of salvation by Christ, and unto eternal happiness, was pointed out, but not so clearly as now; the way into the holiest of all, was not so manifest, as now the veil of the temple is rent in twain. The shadows of the ceremonial law were stretched out at that time; the law was only a shadow of good things to come, and was not so much as the very image of them; which shadows were done away, when Christ, the body and substance was come; to which the church refers, when she says, *until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense*^l:
there

^k Rom. xiii. 12.

^l Cant. iv. 6.

there were indeed in this dispensation, the stars of light, the prophets, and ministers of the word to instruct the people, but then the appearance of these shews it was a night-season; they had the word, which was a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths; they had the scriptures, which were profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness, and able to make men wise unto salvation; they had the moon of the ceremonial law to lead them to Christ; this perhaps is meant by the moon under the church's feet, *Rev. xii. 1.* one part of it lay in the observation of new moons, and its solemn festivals were governed and regulated by them; it had its spots and imperfections as the moon, and was changeable as that is; and is now done away because of the weakness and unprofitableness of it: it is true, it reflected and gave light to the saints under that dispensation; but then as the moon is the lesser light, and which rules by night, this shews it was as yet a night-season, and the day was not come; as yet the bright and morning-star had not appeared; the day-spring from on high had not visited man; and the sun of righteousness as yet had not risen, and made the glorious Gospel-day. It may be to this gradual progress of light, thro' the various dispensations of the church, Christ may have respect, when he says, *'who is she that looks*

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forth

forth as the morning, in the patriarchal state ;
fair as the moon, under the ceremonial law ;
clear as the sun, under the Gospel-dispen-
 sation ; *and terrible as an army with banners*,
 in the latter day, when she will enjoy purity
 of doctrine, discipline and ordinances, as
 well as have honour and authority ? Thus
 it was with the *Jewish* church before the
 coming of Christ ; and as to the *Gentile*
 world, it was a time of gross ignorance with
 them, which God winked at, overlooked,
 and took no notice of, or used any methods
 to remove ; they knew not God, the one
 only living and true God, and much less
 God in Christ ; they were without him, and
 without the Messiah, and any knowledge
 of him ; were aliens from the common-
 wealth of *Israel*, and strangers to the cove-
 nants of promise ; they sat in darkness, and
 in the region of the shadow of death, till
 Christ came a light to lighten the *Gentiles*,
 as well as to be the glory of his people
Israel.

Now the question may be with respect to
 this night of *Jewish* and *Gentile* darkness,
 what of this night it was ? how near it was
 to an end ? when that would be, and the
 day break ? There were some general rules
 with respect to this matter, or several pro-
 phecies which pointed to the time of Christ's
 coming, and served as a direction to it, and
 furnished with an answer to this question :
 the

the tribe of *Judah* was not to cease to be a tribe, nor rule and government to cease from it; it was to be the seat of it, until the Messiah came, according to *Jacob's* prophecy; *the Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come*^m: and by other prophecies it appears, that the second temple would not be destroyed until he came, for he was to *come* into it as *the Lord*, the owner and proprietor of it; which coming of his into it would give it a *greater glory* than the first temple hadⁿ. There were frequently hints given out by the watchmen, the prophets, with relation to the coming of Christ, and to his speedy coming; when the faith of the Lord's people was almost worn out, because his coming was so long deferred, one of these watchman is bid to *say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, and will save you*^o; and another, when on his watchtower says, *the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry*^p; and another of these watchmen brings good tidings, and calls upon *Zion* to rejoice, saying, *behold thy king cometh*; he is just ready to appear, and will

^m Gen. xlix. 10.
^o Is. xxxv. 4.

ⁿ Mal. iii. 1. Hag. ii. 7, 9.
^p Hab. ii. 1. 3.

will be here quickly, and describes him and the creature he was to ride upon⁹; and the last of them declares, that *the Lord*, and *messenger of the covenant* would *suddenly come to his temple*¹⁰: *Daniel*, he fixes the very time of his coming, and says¹¹, that *seventy weeks were determined* or cut out for it, even weeks of years, four hundred and ninety years from a date which he gives. By these hints of the watchmen, and especially by the last, the people knew what time of night it was, and how long it would be to the coming of the Messiah, and lived in expectation of it. *R. Nebumiah*, that lived about fifty years before the coming of Christ, gave out, that the time of the Messiah signified by *Daniel* could not be protracted longer than those fifty years¹²; and about the time that he did come, we find that there was among the people of the *Jews*, a general expectation of him: good old *Simeon* was waiting for the consolation of *Israel*; and *Anna* the prophetess spoke of him to them that looked for redemption in *Jerusalem*; and when *John the Baptist* his fore-runner appeared, all the people were in expectation, and mused in their hearts whether he was the Christ or no¹³.

It might be further observed, that as there was a night of darkness preceding the first

⁹ Zach. ix. 9.

¹⁰ Mal. iii. 1.

¹¹ Dan. ix. 24.

¹² Apud Grotium de Veritat. Rel. Christ. l. 5. §. 14.

¹³ Luke ii. 25. 38. and iii. 15.

first coming of Christ, when at certain times the watchmen were applied unto, to know what time it was; and who gave several hints, which were directions in this matter, and served to keep up the saints faith and expectation of it; and by which they knew in some measure where-about they were, and when that would be; so there will be a night of darkness which will go before both the spiritual and personal coming of Christ again, and to which this question may also relate: but of this more hereafter; we shall find a more proper place for the consideration of it under the next head, to which I hasten.

III. The watchman's answer to the question, *the morning cometh, and also the night*: there's a morning at hand, and a night will follow; a morning of prosperity, and a night of adversity; and as sure as the one comes, so sure will the other; there will be a constant succession and revolution of these unto the end of time.

The first coming of Christ was as the morning; so the *Jews*^u interpret these words of the morning of redemption to the righteous, and of the night of darkness to the wicked; or as they elsewhere^x express it, "the morning is for the righteous, and
" the

^u Gloss. in T. Bab. Bava Kama. fol. 3. 2.

^x T. Hieros. Taaniet. fol. 64. 1.

“ the night for the wicked ; the morning
 “ for *Israel*, and the night for the nations
 “ of the world ;” whom they exclude from
 all benefit by the Messiah. It is said of him,
 the righteous rule, over men, that *he shall
 be as the light of the morning when the sun
 riseth, even a morning without clouds*^y ; of
 no other can this be so well understood as
 of Christ ; of whom it is expressly foretold,
his going forth is prepared as the morning^z :
 this was attended with joy and chearfulness
 as the morning ; in a clear morning when
 the sun rises, all nature looks brisk and
 gay, pleasant and delightful ; hence those
 words, *who is she that looks forth as the
 morning*^a ? The news of Christ’s birth,
 brought by the angels to the shepherds, at
 the time of his incarnation, were *good tidings
 of great joy, which should be to all people*^b.
 The apostles and disciples when they first
 had the knowledge of him, in what an ex-
 ulting manner do they express themselves,
*We have found the Messiah, which is, being
 interpreted, the Christ*^c ? The first preach-
 ing of the Gospel by his fore-runner, by
 himself, and by his apostles, caused Joy and
 gladness wherever it came with power,
 whether in *Judea*, or in the *Gentile* world ;
 especially the latter, and particularly in
Samaria ; of which place it is said, that
Philip

^y 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.^b Luke ii. 11.^z Hof. vi. 3.^c John i. 41.^a Cant. vi. 10.

Philip preached Christ, and there was great joy in that city^d. The coming of Christ dispersed the shadows of the ceremonial law; these vanished and disappeared when Christ was come and suffered in the flesh, who was the body and substance of them; and the morning of the Gospel-dispensation dawned; and as it dispelled the darkness of the law, it introduced light. *John*, the fore-runner of Christ, was not the light itself, but he came to bear witness of the light; which is Christ, the light of the world; who brought light into it; and is that great light which shined on men sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death. The gospel which came by him, and he gave his apostles to preach, is a glorious light; and this shone out and appeared to all men, *Jews and Gentiles*. This, like the morning-light, spread itself all over the world; the apostles had a commission to go into all the world, and preach it to every creature; and the sound of it by them did go into all the earth, and their words or doctrines unto the end of the world: before the destruction of *Jerusalem*, the Gospel was preached unto all nations; one of the apostles, the apostle *Paul*, preached it fully from *Jerusalem*, round about unto *Illyricum*: And this, like the light of the morning, moved on irresistibly; nothing could

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^d Acts viii. 5, 8.

stop it, as nothing can the morning-light ; it had a free course, and ran, and was glorified ; notwithstanding the rage and fury of persecutors, the word of the Lord grew and multiplied ; tho' the whole world was against it, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, the most powerful, wise and learned, it made its way, and bore down all opposition to it ; the ministers of it triumphed in Christ, and diffused the favour of his knowledge, and the light of his word, in every place.

But then as sure as this morning came, so sure a *night* followed, and that very quickly, to the *Jews* ; the light of the Gospel was in a little time taken from them, they despising, contradicting, and blaspheming it ; even whilst Christ the light was with them, they rejected him ; they loved and chose darkness rather than the light ; there were only a few, a remnant according to the election of grace that received him, the rest were *blinded* ; and the blindness which happened to them continues unto this day, and will continue till the fulness of the *Gentiles* is brought in : it has been a long night with them, and when it will be otherwise, cannot be precisely said ; the veil of darkness and ignorance in reading *Moses*, and the prophets, and especially in those things which respect the Messiah, remains untaken away ; but will be done away in Christ, and be removed when they shall

shall be converted, and turn to the Lord. And tho' the light of the Gospel continued longer in the *Gentile* world, and may be thought to be in its meridian in the times of *Constantine*, yet thence forward it visibly declined; an evening came on, a night of darkness prevailed; which was brought on in the *Eastern* part of the world, by the arising of the false prophet *Mahomet*; who having *the key of the bottomless pit*, opened it, and let out *the smoke* of his false doctrine contained in his *Alkoran*, by which *the sun and the air were darkned*; and also his *locusts* the *Saracens*, which ran over the East, and spread his doctrine and worship every where^e: about the same time, *the man of sin*, the *Romish* antichrist was *revealed*, being come to his maturity and ripeness; and that which *let* or hindred his appearance, the *Roman* emperor, being taken out of the way; whose coming was *after the working of satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*^f; and spread darkness all over the western part of the world; and then those times came on, the Spirit expressly speaks of, that many should depart from the faith; give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speak lies in hypocrisy; forbid to marry; and command to abstain from

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meats

^e Rev. ix. 1.^f 2 Theff. ii. 3, 7, 9, 10.

meats God has created to be received with thanksgiving^g; which are manifestly popish tenets. This dark state of things is represented by the *Thyatirian* church-state; in which were the depths of satan, and the blackness of popish darkness; when the woman *Jezebel* taught and seduced the servants of the Lord to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols^h; and a long dismal dark night it was, which lasted till the Reformation.

But when the Reformation came on, another *morning* appeared; and which is expressed by *the morning-star*ⁱ, promised to the overcomers of the errors and superstitions of the *Thyatirian* state; and which the *Sardian* church-state brought in: then the Gospel broke out in a most glorious manner, and spread itself like the morning-light, swiftly and irresistibly, over those western parts, *Germany, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland*, and these isles of *Great Britain and Ireland*, and other places; and brought with it great joy and gladness every where; and things went on in a very comfortable and promising manner; and it looked as if the old apostolical times were coming over again; and indeed the first Reformers proposed to go upon the *plan* of the apostles doctrine and practice:

^g 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.
ⁱ Rev. ii. 29.

^h Rev. ii. 20. 24.

practice: hence part of the same character is taken by the writer to this church of *Sardis*, as to the church at *Ephesus*, which represented the truly apostolic church; *these things, saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars*^k; for great gifts were now bestowed on men, and who shone as stars in Christ's right-hand; but then it is not added, *who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*; for tho' the first Reformers went a great way in restoring true doctrine, they yet fell short in reforming the discipline of the churches, and therefore their *works were not found perfect before God*: there were many bright Gospel-ministers, but few, if any churches formed according to the primitive model; and in process of time, there was an entire stand put to the Reformation itself, and things went backwards instead of forwards; and of late years, there has been a very visible decline; and a night is coming on, which we are entered into; the shadows of the evening are stretching out apace upon us, and the signs of the even-tide are very manifest, and which will shortly appear yet more and more. A sleepy frame of spirit has seized us; both ministers and churches are asleep; and being so, the enemy is busy in sowing the tares of errors and heresies, and which will grow up and spread yet more and more.

Coldness

^k Rev. ii. 1. and iii. 1.

Coldness and indifference in spiritual things, a want of affection to God, Christ, his people, truths and ordinances, may easily be observed: the first love is left; iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, and it will wax yet colder and colder; and will issue in a general forsaking of assembling together, and in an entire neglect of the ministers of the Gospel; when such who have been professors themselves will be shy of them, and carefully shun them; won't care to own them; or speak to them, and much less receive them into their houses, and still less hear them; which, I think, is meant by, or at least is one part of the meaning of the dead bodies of the witnesses not being suffered to be put into graves¹: the sun of the Gospel will be set, and its light for a while wholly withdrawn, the witnesses will be slain, their dead bodies lie unburied, and so cease prophesying, their testimony being finished; this will be a dismal dark night indeed; only it will be a short one.

If it should be asked, what time it is with us now? whereabouts we are? and what is yet to come of this night? as a faithful watchman I'll give you the best account I can: I take it, we are in the *Sardian* church-state, in the latter part of it, which, as before observed, brought on the Reformation,

¹ See my Exposition of Rev. xi. 9.

mation, and represents that ; we are in the decline of that state : and there are many things said of that church which agree with us ; as that we have a *name*, that we *live*, and are *dead*, the name of the reformed churches, but without the life and power of true religion ; and that there are a *few*, and but a few *names* among us, even in our *Sardis*, *which have not defiled their garments*^m with false doctrine or superstitious worship. The times we live in are just such as are described in *Zeck. xiv. 6, 7.* *that the light shall not be clear nor dark, but it shall be one day, which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night : not clear, not full day, as at noon, as it was in the times of Christ and his Apostles ; when the sun of righteousness was risen, and the shadows of Jewish and Gentile darkness vanished, and the Gospel shone out in the ministry of the Apostles ; when the church had on her head a crown of twelve stars, was cloathed with the sun, and had the moon under her feet : nor is it so clear day with us as even at the Reformation ; for tho' there may be some ministers and churches which may have more clear, distinct, and evangelic light than there was at that time ; yet take the Protestant churches in the bulk, and there is not so much light now as then : nor is it such clear day as it will be in the*
spiritual

^m Rev. iii. 1. 4.

spiritual reign of Christ, when will be the *brightness* of *Zion's rising*; not to take notice of the kingdom-state during the thousand years, which will be all day and no night; nor of the ultimate glory, the inheritance of the saints in light: and yet it is not totally dark, or quite night; not so dark as it was with the *Jews* under the former dispensation, who could not see to the end of that which was to be abolished; much less as it was with the *Gentiles* before the coming of Christ; or as in the dark times of popery; nor as it will be at the even-tide of the present dispensation we are under, before described; it is a sort of a twilight with us, between clear and dark, between day and night. As to what of the night is yet to come, or what will befall the churches, and will bring on the dismal night before us; they are, the slaying of the witnesses, and the universal spread of popery all over *Christendom*; and the latter is the unavoidable consequence of the former.

The slaying of the witnesses, which I understand not so much in a literal sense, or of a corporal death; tho' there may be many slain in this sense when it will be; but in a civil sense, with respect to their ministry, being silenced by their enemies, and neglected by their friends; this is an affair that is not yet over: some have thought that it is, and that the prophecy of it had

its accomplishment in the burning of the protestants in *Queen Mary's* time, which lasted about three years and a half; or, according to others, in *King James the II's* reign, which was about such a length of time; but this is not at all likely, since then the witnesses had liberty granted them to prophesy: it is more likely, that it should be fulfilled in the case of the protestants of the valleys of *Piedmont*, who were driven out from thence for nonconformity to the *Romish* religion, by the duke of *Savoy*; and who recalled and re-established them by an edict just three years and a half after; but these instances with others which are proposed, were only hints or pledges of what is hereafter to be done: these were at most only partial slayings of the witnesses; whereas this will be universal; it will not be in one place only, but every where, wherever there are any. Besides, the outward court must be given to the *Gentiles* e're the witnesses, which are in the inward court, can be come at and slain, which is not yet done. The *Gentiles* are the papists; the outward court is the bulk of the Reformed churches, which will fall into the hands of the papists again; since the Reformation has been at a stand, and things have been upon the decline, the papists have got ground, and have regained some part of the outward court, as in *Germany, Poland,*

land, &c. But they have not as yet got the whole into their hands, as they will, and which they must, e're they can make this universal slaughter of the witnesses: an house that has an outward court, or a court-yard unto it, the court is a fence to the house, and there is no coming at the one without entring the other; and so all churches established by the laws of the countries where they are, or all those civil and worldly establishments, are fences and guards about the witnesses; so long as these are out of the hands of the papists, they can't come at the witnesses, they are safe; but when these are once gained over, then they'll be slain, and not till then. Moreover, the witnesses have not yet finished their testimony; they are still prophesying, tho' in sackcloth, or under some discouragements; whereas it will be when they have finished their testimony, and at the close of the 1260 days or years of antichrist's reign, that they will be killed. And had they been slain at any of the times before-mentioned, they would have risen long before now; for the time between their death and rising is but three days and a half, that is, three years and a half; they would have ascended up to heaven before now, which denotes a most glorious state of the church; and the ruin of antichrist would have come on long before this time; for that will immediately

mediately follow the rising and ascension of these witnesses^a; for at the same hour that they shall ascend, will be a great earthquake, or a revolution in the papal state; and the tenth part of the city, or of the *Romish* jurisdiction, shall fall; that is, one of its ten horns, kings or kingdoms belonging to it, and perhaps the kingdom of *France* is meant; and seven thousand men of name will be slain, and the rest be affrighted, and give glory to God^o; nothing of which has as yet been done: to which may be added, that upon the fulfillment of the above things, the second woe will pass away, and the third woe will take place; the second woe brought the *Saracens* and *Turks* into the empire, and the passing away of it relates to the destruction of the *Turkish* empire, or will issue in that; for when that is over, the *Turkish* empire will be at end; whereas it is still in being, and in great power; and the third woe, or the sounding of the seventh trumpet, will bring on the kingdom of Christ; but as yet, there is no appearance of the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. From all which it may be concluded, that the slaying of the witnesses is yet to come, and will make the dismal part

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of

^a See the Exposition as b. fore.
and Exposition in ib.

^o Rev. xi. 13.

of that night we are entring into, and which will be accompanied with an universal spread of popery: popery will be once more the reigning, prevailing religion in *Christendom*; and indeed how should it otherwise be? for when the witnesses will be slain, there will be none to oppose the power and progress of it; there will be an universal triumph among the inhabitants of the earth; the popish party upon this will rejoice, and send gifts to one another; the outward court being in their hands, and the witnesses slain^p: and that mystical *Babylon*, or the whore of *Rome*, will be in *statu quo*, and in all her glory and grandeur at the time of her destruction, is evident from her saying, *I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow*; every thing now being according to her wishes; having regained all her former power and glory, and nothing to fear from the witnesses who had before tormented her, they now being slain; but her *plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire*^q; even in the ruff of all her glory; which does not seem to comport with her present state and circumstances; she will have more flesh upon her than now she seems to have, when the kings shall hate her, and make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire

^p Rev. xi. 10.

^q Rev. xviii. 7, 8.

fire: before the utter destruction of antichrist, he shall go forth again with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many; yea, he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain, or the mountain of delight, of holiness; and what place is there in all the globe, to which this description so well answers as *Great Britain*? this will be done before, and but a little before his ruin; for it follows, yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

And I am the more confirmed in all this, by the present appearances of things in the world; as, the very great increase of popery in our own land, and in other countries; for tho' the *Pope of Rome*, as a secular prince, and with respect to the exercise of his power and authority as such, is not what he was, and is much declining, and has not that regard paid him by the kings of the earth as formerly, yet popery itself is far from being on the decline, or losing ground; as also the great departure of the reformed churches, so called, from the doctrines and principles of the reformation; and even of protestant dissenters, who are gone, and are going more and more into doctrines and practices which naturally verge and lead to popery; to which may be added, the various sects which within a few years have sprung

sprung up among us; the doctrines and practices of some of them being similar to those of the church of *Rome*: I will not say that in general they have it in view and design to encourage and increase the *Romish* religion; yet I am very jealous that this is the view of some; but be this as it will, I am very much of opinion, that these things will at last issue in popery; and that some of those persons will be suffered as instruments to spread it, both here, and in all our colonies and plantations abroad.

Now in all that I have said upon the whole, I do not pretend to any extraordinary impulse from God, or to any prophetic spirit, but I ground all upon the word of God; and if what I have said does not appear from thence, and upon the face of things in providence, I have no pretensions to any thing else to support my opinion with; and as such only I deliver it. But then after this dark night,

There will be another *morning*, the spiritual reign of Christ which the *Philadelphian* church-state will introduce; and a bright glorious morning it will be; when it shall be said to the church, *arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*; and then *the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the*
light

light of seven days : then will the witnesses rise and ascend to heaven ; then will the vials of God's wrath be poured out upon the antichristian states, and the kings of the earth will hate the whore and burn her with fire ; and then the gospel will be spread every where ; there will be an open door for it, and none will be able to shut it ; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased ; the earth will be filled with it, as the waters cover the sea ; the watchmen will see eye to eye, all truth very clearly, distinctly, and in agreement with one another ; multitudes will be converted every where ; and churches set up according to gospel-order in every place ; the doctrines of the gospel will be purely preached ; its ordinances administered as they were first received from Christ, and gospel-discipline strictly attended to ; the fulness of the *Gentiles* will now be brought in, and the nation of the Jews born at once. It will be a time of great joy and gladness to the saints : now will those voices be heard in heaven the church, *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ ; the four and twenty elders*, the representatives of gospel-churches will *fall upon their faces*, and *give thanks* to Christ, because he has taken to himself his great power and reigns ;
those

those that have got the victory over the beast and his image, will stand upon *the sea of glass*, with harps in their hands, and sing the song of *Moses* and the Lamb; the voice of much people will be heard saying, *Allelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, to the Lord our God*; both because of his judgments on the great whore, and the revenging of the blood of his servants at her hand, and because the marriage of the Lamb will be come[▪]: it will be a time of great prosperity, both temporal and spiritual; in those days of Christ's spiritual reign, the *righteous* will flourish, both in things outward and inward; and *abundance of peace*, both from without and from within, shall be had as long as the moon endures; Christ shall have *dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth*; *kings* shall bring presents to him, shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him; for *kings* will now come with their subjects, to the brightness of the church, and embrace the doctrines, and submit to the ordinances of it, and will be *nursing fathers* unto it[▪]: and yet as sure as this morning comes,

A night will follow; not of persecution of the churches of Christ; for after the slaying of the witnesses, there will be

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[▪] Rev. xi. 15, 16, 17. and xv. 1, 2. and xix. 1 — 8.

[▪] Ps. lxxii. 7, 8, 10, 11. If. lx. 3. and xlix. 23.

no more persecution; but a night of coldness, deadness, sleepiness, and carnal security, brought in by the *Laodicean* state; of which church Christ complains, that it was neither *hot* nor *cold*, but *lukewarm*, and therefore threatens to *spue her out of his mouth*^{*}; that is, unchurch her: and indeed after that, he will have no other church on earth in an imperfect state, for that will issue in his personal coming; and with this entirely agrees the account our Lord gives of men at that time, that there will be very little grace in exercise; when he comes he'll find scarce any *faith on the earth*, in exercise on himself, and with respect to his coming; these days will be like the days of *Noah* and of *Lot*, when men were eating and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage, and had no thought of what was coming upon them[†]; this will be the last night to the church; and then,

Another morning will come, when Christ the bright and morning-star shall appear, and bring on that day, which will last a thousand years, and which thousand years will be as one day. Upon Christ's personal coming, the dead in him will rise first; they'll have the dominion in the morning of this day, the morning of the resurrection which will now take place; for the rest of the dead will not live 'till the evening of this

* Rev. iii. 15, 16.

† Luke xvii. 26—29. and xviii. 8.

this day, or rather till the thousand years are ended. And in this state, there will be *no need of the sun, or of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the lamb will be the light thereof; the sun shall be no more the light of men by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light; but the Lord shall be an everlasting light, and the days of mourning shall be ended*²; there will be no night in this state, no setting of the sun, or withdrawing of the moon; and after this, there will be no more night to the saints; but there will be an everlasting one to the wicked; who will rise at the end of the thousand years, and be judged, and be cast into the lake of fire, into outer darkness, even blackness of darkness, where will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Thus there will be a constant succession of morning and night, unto the end of time; which will issue in an everlasting day to some, and in an everlasting night to others³. I now proceed,

IV. To the exhortation upon all this; *if ye will enquire, enquire ye, return, come.*

If you will *enquire* about the time of night, and when the morning will come, *enquire*

² Rev. xxi. 23. II. lx. 19, 20.

³ So the *Targum* paraphrases these words, "the prophet said, there is a reward for the righteous, and there is vengeance for the wicked;" taking them to relate to the world to come.

enquire in good earnest; enquire seriously; search the scripture; look into the prophetic parts of it; the several prophecies of the Old and New Testament, respecting both the spiritual and personal coming of Christ, and particularly the book of the *Revelation*; which is a prophetic history of events, that should befall the church and the world, from the first times of christianity to the end of all things; many of which have been fulfilled, and others remain to be fulfilled: carefully read over these accounts, and get the best help you can from those who have made it their study to understand, and explain the things written therein; whereby you will in some measure know what is come to pass, and what is yet behind. And to reading add prayer and supplication as *Daniel* did; who after he had understood by books, by reading the prophecies of *Jeremiah*, when would be the end of the *Babylonish* captivity, the night he and his people were then in; set his face to seek the Lord by prayer and supplication, and had the time of the Messiah's coming made known to him^b: and whilst you are enquiring either after the spiritual reign of Christ, or his second coming to judgment, enquire with modesty and humility; not indulging a vain curiosity, or looking into things that you ought not, and which are not

^b Dan. ix. 2, 3, 4.

not written; or fixing times and seasons which God has put in his own power. *Return* to the Lord by faith and repentance, from whom you have backslidden in doctrine and practice; who invites you so to do with promises of a gracious reception, and with the healing of all your backslidings: as you are of the *Sardian* church, hear what is said unto you; *be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die—remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent*^c; remember from whom and from what you have gone back, and do your first works of faith and love, and hold fast the old doctrines of the Reformation, then heard and received, and abide by them. *Come* to the Lord as humble penitents; let backsliders come for the fresh application of pardoning grace and mercy; let sensible sinners come to the person, blood and righteousness of Christ for justification and salvation; let them come to his word, and to his ordinances; *The Spirit and the bride say come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*^d; and such who come to Christ aright, will hear another day those words spoken to them; *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*^e.

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^c Rev. iii. 2, 3.

^d Rev. xxii. 17.

^e Matt. xxv. 34.

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